

Statement by the Director of Communications on the President's
Discussions With the Presidents of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia
March 19, 1994

Following the signing ceremony yesterday, the President met with President Izetbegovic of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The two leaders discussed next steps following yesterday's agreements. The President told President Izetbegovic that the United States will work with the European Union and other states to provide economic assistance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Bosnia. The President also told the Bosnian President that the United States is prepared to sign a bilateral assistance agreement establishing a framework for future technical and economic assistance.

The President confirmed that the United States would reopen our Embassy in Sarajevo in the near future. Ambassador Victor Jackovich has been resident in Vienna since last fall because of the security situation in Sarajevo. Our decision to reopen the Embassy underscores our commitment to Bosnia's security and stability. The President reaffirmed the intention of the United States to participate in the implementation of a viable peace agreement among the parties in Bosnia.

The President also met with President Tudjman of Croatia. The two leaders discussed Croatia's role in helping make the agreements signed today succeed. The United States will work with Croatia and the Bosniac-Croat Federation toward their full integration in Western political, economic, and security arrangements. The President announced that the United States is ready to sign a bilateral aid agreement to establish a framework for future technical and economic assistance for Croatia. The United States also is prepared to sign a science and

technology agreement and to open negotiations on a bilateral investment treaty and a double taxation treaty.

To help alleviate the humanitarian situation and to assist Croatia to care for refugees and persons displaced as a result of the conflict, the United States will provide \$2 million for the hospital partnership and \$1.5 million for medical supplies.

The President announced that Croatia would be allowed to open consulates in New York, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and Los Angeles. To further advance the contacts between our nations, the United States will double the Fulbright program and donate \$50,000 worth of American studies books to the recently rebuilt American Studies Library in Dubrovnik.

The President reaffirmed United States support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Croatia and committed to help secure the peaceful solution to the problems of the U.N. Protected Areas (UNPA's). To this end, the United States will continue to use sanctions and other economic pressure against Serbia in the most effective way possible. We also intend to play an active diplomatic role in assisting Croatia in resolving its dispute with the Krajina Serbs.

The United States firmly believes that adherence to the highest standards of human and civil rights for Croatia's Serb community is an essential condition for the reintegration of the UNPA's. President Tudjman's stated commitments in this regard are constructive; his proposals for autonomy for Serb-majority areas provide a good basis for beginning negotiations.

Exchange With Reporters in Miami, Florida
March 20, 1994

North Korea

Q. Anything new on North Korea, Mr. President?

The President. As you know, the Board of Governors of the IAEA is meeting tomorrow.

Our goals remain the same. We haven't changed our policy. We did do quite a bit of work yesterday, spent a good deal of time discussing this. But I really don't have anything else to say

at this time. I'm talking to our allies. And we're working through this and what our options are.

Q. Is there any possibility that sanctions can be avoided at this point?

The President. Is there what?

Q. Do you have any reason to believe that sanctions can be avoided at this point?

The President. Well, of course, they can. They can—that really is a decision that's up to the North Koreans as much as anything else. But there are—we also have some hope that they will go forward. They did let the inspectors in; then they didn't; they did. There seems to be a difference of opinion within their country about how to proceed. So to some extent the ball is still clearly in their court. But we are proceeding to consider all of our options and to talk with our allies about it.

Q. What is your hope based on, that they might allow full inspections, sir?

The President. I didn't say I hope. He didn't ask me if I hoped they would.

Q. You said that there's still a hope, you said?

The President. Well, of course, there is. There appear to be people within North Korea that want to proceed to normalize the relations of their country with the international community and people who don't. And we'll just have to see what they do now, where we go from here. But our objectives remain what they have always been. We have been entirely reasonable and forthcoming. And we have also worked very closely with not only our strong allies in South Korea but with the Japanese, the Chinese, and others who share many or if not all of our objectives. So we're going to keep going forward, see what happens in the next few days. But the next step is to see what happens at the Board of Governors meeting.

Q. Are tensions ratcheting up so high—there appears to be some concern that this may evolve into some kind of armed conflict, given the height of the rhetoric?

The President. Well, I have done everything I could to avoid ratcheting up the tensions while being firm in the objectives of our policy and what I think are in the interests of not just the United States but the people of that part of the world and Asia. So we're just working ahead.

I'm not trying to ratchet up the tensions, I'm just trying to work through this in a very deliberate but very firm and disciplined way, and that's what we'll continue to do.

Thank you.

[At this point, the President moved from White House reporters to a group of Miami reporters and continued answering questions. His remarks are joined in progress.]

Health Care Reform

The President. —have a system of comprehensive benefits, leave Medicare alone—it works—but add prescription drugs, and phase in over time options other than nursing homes for long-term care, and cover people who work through the workplace. Nine out of ten people who have private insurance are already covered through the workplace. This is a very, very big deal. And it is imperative if we're ever going to do what we ought to do to give security to the American people.

We've got to reform the insurance system. You can't have in any given time 39 million people without health insurance. You can't have 113 million—30 million Americans with lifetime limits on their policies. You can't have 81 million Americans with preexisting conditions so that they can't change jobs or they're paying insurance premiums that are too high. You can't have rates that discriminate against older Americans when older Americans are the fastest growing group of our population and more and more of them want to work. So these are all things that have to be dealt with. And I think that the Congress is going to face up to their responsibilities this year. We've got the economy turned around. We're going in the right direction with the economy. We're going to have welfare reform, got some very important school reforms going. But we have to face the obligation to deal with health care reform.

Cuba and Crime Legislation

Q. [Inaudible]—rule out the possibility to talk with Fidel Castro in the near future?

The President. Yes, I have no plans to do that.

The other thing I want to emphasize to you, that before we get to health care—this is a very important issue here in Florida, and I talked with the Attorney General about it in some length just yesterday—that Congress must move quickly to pass the crime bill. In addition to all the interest groups trying to kill health care reform, delay on the crime bill could cause us significant problems. So that's the other big objective. Next week when Congress meets, or

this week now, we've got to go ahead and pass that crime bill. I feel very good about where we are on that.

Q. [Inaudible]—any change in the current policy?

The President. My policy is clear, and I have no plans to change it.

Immigration

Q. Mr. President, on immigration, the State of Florida is talking about a lawsuit against the Federal Government to recoup the monies that this State pays on incoming refugees. Should the Federal Government help pay for that?

The President. We should pay more. And under my administration we are paying more than ever before. This situation had been allowed to develop, in my judgment, to a very severe degree when I became President only a little over a year ago. Since that time, we have moved aggressively to try to alleviate the health, the education, and the welfare costs that States bear because of immigration. The States that have the biggest burdens, California, Florida, and Texas, to some extent New York, have

not been fully reimbursed. But I'm moving ahead to try to alleviate this burden. It isn't fair. National policies, or lack of policies, and the inability of our country to control our borders in the face of illegal immigration, are not the fault of any particular State. And it is a national responsibility. But we are moving in the Congress to try to alleviate these burdens. I worked hard—we made some real progress last year. We're going to make some more this year. And I think Florida should do what they can to keep the pressure on us. But they need to know that I'm on the side of the Florida officials on this one. It's just going to take some time to work ourselves out of a very big hole that I found when I came here.

Thank you all.

Q. Welcome to Florida, Mr. President.

The President. Glad to be back.

NOTE: The exchange began at approximately 3:30 p.m. at Miami International Airport. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Exchange With Reporters in Deerfield Beach, Florida March 21, 1994

North Korea

Q. Anything new on North Korea, Mr. President?

The President. Let me just say, about North Korea, the IAEA has made their judgment; now there will be consultations at the U.N.

I think you know—I think President Kim has confirmed that I sent him a letter at the end of last week. And we have agreed that it is in our national interest and the interest of the security of the people of South Korea and the security of our armed forces there to proceed with the Patriot deployment, so we will do that.

As to the next issues, I think we have to just wait and see what will happen. I can't say more today. We're going to have to work on

this on a day-to-day basis. I will say again, I want to emphasize this decision on the Patriots is purely defensive in nature. But it is appropriate—General Luck has said he thinks it's necessary as the continuing modernization of our forces proceeds. What happens now is still in the court of the North Koreans, and we must hope that they will do the right thing.

Thank you.

NOTE: The exchange began at 12:47 p.m. at Century Village East. In his remarks, the President referred to President Kim Yong-sam of South Korea and Gen. Gary E. Luck, USA, commander, U.S. forces, Korea. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.